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## West Contra Costa school cuts may include adult education, school resource officers

By Shelly Meron

Contra Costa Times

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West Contra Costa educators are adjusting their budget plans now that a statewide June election and tax extensions are off the table.

Barring any new information or funding, district officials plan to cut \$11.6 million from next year's budget, and staff has recommended looking specifically at reductions to the adult education program and contracts with school resource officers, along with staff reductions.

"This has a great effect on our school district," said Sheri Gamba, the district's associate superintendent for business services.

She warned that the \$11.6 million cut is based on current information from Sacramento. Some experts have warned of a potential reduction of up to \$800 per student. If the state's final budget includes more cuts to education, West Contra Costa might be looking at reducing by as much as \$21.8 million next year.

Either way, the long-term picture is still a concern, Gamba said, particularly in the 2012-13 school year. Currently, the district is predicting an \$8.4 million shortfall that year.

Next year's deficit will likely be addressed using federal government money from the Education Jobs Fund, relieving debt service and making some painful cuts. In March, the school district eliminated 138 teacher and other certificated jobs, and this week they voted to trim 14.12 classified positions, including custodians, food service employees, and special education and outreach workers.

District staff also

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have suggested cutting \$1 million each from the special education program and school resource officers' contracts. The board will not vote on a final budget until June, but school board member Tony Thurmond, who heads the district's safety subcommittee, said this week that nothing is certain yet.

"It's a preliminary recommendation from staff at a time when we were trying to prepare for the unknown, and the worst possible situation. The board has been very creative in finding ways to use resources," he said. "(School resource officers and adult education are) very difficult areas where programmatically we can't afford to reduce services. We're being forced to consider those things because we have to find reductions."

That funding creativity may include discussions with city governments, who are helping fund the SRO program, Thurmond said. School officials also are hopeful about a Richmond sales tax on the June

ballot, accompanied by an advisory measure that would allot half the revenues to Richmond school programs. The measure would boost the local sales tax from 9.75 percent to 10.25 percent, and is expected to generate between \$5.5 million and \$6 million each year.

Follow Shelly Meron at [Twitter.com/shellymeron](https://twitter.com/shellymeron).

